

## **1500 - TRAVEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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**1. Explanation of Material Transmitted:** The material transmitted contains amended language in line with the travel policies and procedures contained in NIH Manual 1500 Chapter 04-06 "Actual Expense Allowance (AEA). These changes reiterate HHS policy that, 1) AEA expenses may only be authorized when the subsistence expenses exceed the applicable per diem allowance by an amount in excess of \$5.00; and 2) that staying in a particular hotel to be near the place of official business, is not in itself an adequate justification for requesting, authorizing, or approving travel on an actual expense basis.

### **2. Filing Instructions:**

**Under Chapter 04-06(F)(1)** - The sentence currently reads "Actual expenses should not be authorized when the subsistence costs exceed the applicable per diem by a small amount."

Change to read: "Actual expenses should only be authorized when the subsistence costs exceed the applicable per diem allowance by an amount in excess of \$5.00."

**Under Chapter 04-06(F)(1)** - The paragraph currently, ends with the words "applicable maximum per diem allowance."

**Under Chapter 04-06(F)(2)** - following the header line on existing F(2) that reads, "Situations Which May Warrant Approval of Actual and Necessary Expense Reimbursement". Insert this new paragraph: "**HHS Travel Manual Chapter 05-20 provides that staying in a particular hotel in order to be near the place of official business is not in itself an adequate justification for requesting, authorizing, or approving travel on an actual expense basis.**" However, the following scenarios may warrant such authorization or approval:

**PLEASE NOTE:** For information on:

Content of this chapter, contact the Office of Financial Management on 301-435-2927

NIH Manual System, contact the Office of Management Assessment, OA on 301-496-2832

On-line information, enter this URL:

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**1500-04-00 - Per Diem and Other Allowable Expenses**

**A. General**

This part applies worldwide (both within and outside of CONUS).

**B. Authority**

A per diem allowance (also referred to as a subsistence allowance) shall be paid, as prescribed in this chapter, for official travel away from the official duty station, except when actual subsistence expense is authorized or approved.

**C. Maximum Per Diem Rates Established**

Employees performing official travel for the Federal Government will be reimbursed for their subsistence expenses based on the "lodgings-plus per diem system". Under this system, the travel allowance for each day is established on the basis of a maximum amount the traveler is allowed for lodging (excluding taxes), plus a fixed allowance for meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). Total subsistence expenses shall not exceed the applicable maximum per diem rate for the location of business or en route to and from official business.

1. ***Rates for Continental United States.*** The per diem allowances within the CONUS shall not exceed the maximum rates established by the Administrator of GSA and listed in Appendix A of the Federal Travel Regulations.

2. ***Rates for Non-Foreign Areas Outside CONUS (OCONUS)***. The per diem allowances payable for official travel in non-foreign areas shall not exceed the maximum per diem rates established by the Secretary of Defense and listed in Civilian Personnel Per Diem Bulletins.
3. ***Rates for Foreign Areas***. Per diem allowances payable for official travel in foreign areas shall not exceed the maximum per diem established by the Secretary of State and published in section 925 of the Standardized Regulations. (Web Site: <http://www.state.gov/www/perdiems/1999/9910aperdiems.html>)

#### **D. Elements of Per Diem**

There are two basic elements that make up the standard per diem rates: lodging, meals, and incidental expenses (M&IE).

1. ***Lodging*** – The term "lodging" includes expenses, except lodging taxes, for overnight sleeping facilities; baths; personal use of the room during daytime; telephone access fees; and service charges for fans, air conditioners, heaters, and fires furnished in rooms when such charges are not included in the room rate. Lodging does not include accommodations on airplanes, trains, buses, or ships. Such cost is included in the transportation cost and is not considered a lodging expense.  
  
**(Exception: lodging taxes have not been removed from the foreign per diem rates. Therefore, separate claims for these amounts will not be allowed.)**
2. ***Meals*** – Expenses for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and related tips and taxes (specifically excluded are alcoholic beverage and entertainment expenses, and any expenses incurred for other persons).
3. ***Incidental expenses:***
  - a. Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel maids, stewards, or stewardesses and others on ships, and hotel servants in foreign countries.
  - b. Transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken (except as provided in [FTR 301-10.420\(a\)\(3\)](#)), if suitable meals cannot be obtained at the TDY site; and
  - c. Fees to obtain money and payment of Government-sponsored charge card billings. ([FTR 301-12.1](#))

#### **E. General Rules Affecting Entitlement to Per Diem**

1. ***No allowance at official station.*** Per diem shall not be allowed within the limits of the official station or at, or within the vicinity of, the traveler's home from which they normally commute daily to their official station. The local commuting area for the NIH is defined as a radius of 35 miles (For further information, See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter 06](#)).
2. ***Travel of twelve hours or less (12-Hour Rule).*** A per diem allowance shall not be allowed when the period of official travel is 12 hours or less. This rule also applies to travel incident to change of official duty station.

**Example:** Traveler leaves residence at 7:30 a.m. on 08/14 and travels to Philadelphia, PA. Traveler returns to residence at 6:00 p.m. on 08/14. (No overnight lodging).

**Per Diem reimbursement:** NONE (less than 12 hours in travel status).

3. **Beginning and ending of entitlement.** For computing per diem allowances, official travel begins at the time an employee leaves his/her home, office, or other authorized point of departure and ends when the traveler returns to his/her home, office, or other authorized point at the conclusion of the trip.
4. **International Dateline.** In cases where the traveler crosses the international date line (180<sup>th</sup> meridian), the actual elapsed time shall be used to compute per diem rather than calendar days.

## 1500-04-01 - Meals and Incidental Expenses

### A. Travel of More Than 12 Hours, but Not Exceeding 24 Hours

When the travel period (entire trip) for which per diem is authorized is more than 12 hours but not more than 24 hours, the per diem for the trip will be calculated as follows:

1. **Lodging not required.** If lodging is not required, the per diem allowable shall be three-quarters of the M&IE rate for the temporary duty point involved.

**Example:** Traveler leaves residence at 6:30 a.m. on 08/14 and travels to Philadelphia, PA. Traveler returns to residence at 8:00 p.m. on 08/14. (No overnight lodging required.)

**Per Diem reimbursement:**  $\frac{3}{4} \times \$42$  (Phila. M&IE rate) = \$31.50.

2. **Lodging required.** If lodging is required, the rules for travel of more than 24 hours apply.

### B. Travel of More Than 24 Hours

The applicable maximum per diem rate for each calendar day of travel shall be determined by the travel status and location of the employee at 12:00 midnight and whether lodging is required at such location. When lodging is required, the applicable maximum per diem rate shall be the maximum rate prescribed for the temporary duty location, or a stopover point where lodging is obtained while en route to, from, or between temporary duty locations. Only one per diem rate is applicable to a calendar day. For travel of more than 24 hours, per diem shall be calculated based on the following rules:

1. **Day travel begins – Lodging required.** When lodging is required on the day travel begins (day of departure from home, office, or other authorized duty point), the per diem allowable shall be the actual cost of lodging incurred by the traveler, limited to the applicable lodging allowance, plus **three-quarters** of the applicable M&IE for the location of the lodging.

**Example:** Per Diem for New Orleans, LA: Lodging \$88; M&IE \$42. Traveler leaves office at 1:00 p.m. on 11/23 for TDY in New Orleans, LA and incurs lodging cost of \$93 per night.

**Per Diem reimbursement 1st day:**  $\frac{3}{4} \times \$42 = \$31.50$  (M&IE) + \$88.00 lodging (maximum on hotel reimbursement) TOTAL: \$119.50 for 1st day.

2. ***Day travel begins – Lodging not required.*** When lodging is not required on the day travel begins, the per diem allowable shall be **three-quarters** of the destination M&IE rate.

**Example:** Traveler leaves residence at 5:45 p.m. on 06/20 and travels to Rome, Italy. Traveler arrives in Rome at 8:00 a.m. on 06/21. (No lodging - overnight on plane).

**Per Diem reimbursement for 06/20 =  $\frac{3}{4}$  x Rome M&IE rate. No lodging allowance.**

3. ***Full calendar days of travel – Lodging required.*** For each full calendar day that the employee is in travel status and lodging is required (whether en route or at a temporary duty location), per diem allowable shall be the actual cost of lodging incurred, limited to the applicable lodging allowance prescribed for the location, plus the full M&IE allowance.

**Example:** Using the example above, the Traveler arrives in Rome, Italy on 06/21 - Entitled to 1 full 24-hour day for 06/21), and all full days of travel until the day of return when lodging is required.

**Per Diem reimbursement:** All the M&IE @ Rome rate + lodging @ Rome rate.

4. ***Full calendar days of travel – Lodging not required.*** For each full calendar day that the traveler is in travel status and lodging is not required, the per diem allowance shall be the destination M&IE rate.

**Example:** Traveler does TDY in New York City, NY and stays with friends or relatives. No lodging receipt obtained.

**Per Diem reimbursement:**  $\frac{3}{4}$  M&IE on the 1st and last day + full M&IE on all full calendar days (24 hours) during the official duty @ NY rate.

5. ***Returning from travel - Lodging required.*** For each calendar day of travel when lodging is required at an en route location while the employee is returning to the official station, home, or other authorized point, the per diem allowable shall be the actual cost of lodging incurred, limited to the applicable lodging allowance prescribed for the location of the lodging, plus the applicable M&IE.

**Example:** Traveler returning from Sydney, Australia on 04/18; stopover in Honolulu, Hawaii. 04/19 Hawaii to Washington, D.C.

**Per Diem reimbursement:** 04/18 is full M&IE and maximum lodging @ Honolulu rates (stopovers allowed en route to permanent duty stations when travel time is over 14-hours).

6. ***Returning from travel - Lodging not required.*** For any full calendar day of travel when lodging is not required while the traveler is en route overnight returning to the official duty station, home, or other authorized point, the per diem allowable shall be the full M&IE rate applicable to the preceding calendar day.

**Example:** Traveler is returning from TDY in San Francisco, CA on 09/27. The plane is due @7:00 p.m. Severe weather conditions delay the return to home until 12:45 a.m. on 09/28.

**Per Diem reimbursement:** Full M&IE @ San Francisco rate for 09/27 +  $\frac{3}{4}$  M&IE @ San Francisco rate for 09/28.

7. ***Returning from travel - Day travel ends.*** For the day travel ends (day traveler returns to the official duty station, home, or other authorized point) the per diem allowable shall be

three-quarters of the M&IE rate applicable to the preceding calendar day.

8. ***Lodging obtained after midnight.*** Although per diem generally is based on the employee's location at midnight, there will be instances when he/she is enroute and does not arrive at the lodging location until after midnight. In such cases, the lodging shall be claimed for the preceding calendar day and the applicable maximum per diem for the preceding day will be determined as if the employee had been at the lodging location at midnight of that day.
9. ***Commercial Vessel.*** For vessel travel, Alaska Ferry System, etc. ([FTR 301-11.101\(b\)](#) for per diem requirements and [FTR 301-10.183](#) for class accommodations).

## **1500-04-02 Lodging**

### **A. Lodging - Location, Receipt Requirements, and Allowable Expenses**

1. ***Lodging Location Rules – At TDY Location.*** It is presumed the employee will obtain lodging at the temporary duty location. However, if the employee obtains lodging away from or outside the temporary duty location because of personal preference or convenience, the allowable per diem shall be limited to the maximum per diem rate prescribed for the temporary duty location.
2. ***Lodging Location Rules – Lodging Not Available at TDY Location.*** In certain circumstances, lodging accommodations may not be available at the temporary duty location and the employee must obtain lodging in an adjacent locality where the prescribed maximum per diem rate is higher than the maximum rate for the location of the temporary duty point. In such cases, the agency may make an administrative determination on an individual basis to authorize the higher per diem rate. If the higher rate is not authorized in advance, the employee must submit a satisfactory justification explaining the situation causing the change of lodging location before reimbursement is paid.

### **B. Lodging Receipt Requirements**

Receipts shall be required to support all lodging costs for which an allowance is claimed under the lodgings-plus system except that a statement instead of a receipt may be accepted for the fee or service charge incurred for the use of Government quarters.

1. ***Double occupancy.*** If two employees on official business share a hotel room. Each employee may claim ½ of the room based on the maximum allowed locality rate. If the person sharing the room is not another Government employee on official travel, the employee may be allowed the single room rate.
2. ***Receipts lost or impractical to obtain.*** If receipts have been lost or destroyed or are impractical to obtain, a statement explaining the circumstances shall be furnished with the travel voucher, including the name and address of the lodging facility, the dates of lodging, and the exact cost incurred. Employees of NIH will be required to obtain copies of lost or destroyed receipts from the lodging facility if at all possible.

### **C. Allowable Lodging Expenses**

The traveler will be reimbursed only for his/her actual cost of lodging up to the maximum amount. The following paragraphs describe other allowable lodging expenses.



1. **Conventional lodging.** When an employee uses conventional lodging facilities (hotels/motels, etc.), the allowable lodging expense will be based on the single room rate. For double occupancy (see paragraph B (1) above) and for rentals ([FTR 301-11.15\(a\)](#)).
2. **Government quarters.** A fee or service charge paid for the use of Government quarters is an allowable lodging expense.
3. **Lodging with friends or relatives.** When the employee obtains lodging from friends or relatives, with or without charge, no part of the per diem allowance will be allowed for lodging. In rare cases, some cost may be substantiated if the host actually incurs additional costs in accommodating the traveler (i.e. issues pertaining to use of public laundry facilities, refrigeration, etc.) Reasonable costs of items should be stated on the voucher. Claims should not be based on locality per diem nor "token" amounts when determining reasonableness.
4. **Lodging in non-conventional facilities.** When lodging facilities cannot be obtained (e.g. remote areas) or when there is a shortage of rooms because of an influx of attendees at special events, costs of lodging obtained in non-conventional facilities may be allowed. Such facilities may include college dormitories or similar facilities and rooms generally not offered commercially but made available to the public by area residents in their private homes. Travelers must provide an explanation of the circumstances.
5. **Use of travel trailer or camping vehicle for lodgings.** A per diem allowance for lodging may be allowed when the traveler uses a travel trailer or camping vehicle while on temporary duty assignments away from his/her official duty station.
6. **Hotel/motel discounts.** Many hotels and motels offer reduced rates or Government per diem rates to Federal employees on official business. The "on-line" Federal Travel Directory and the Travel Management Center can obtain a current listing. In addition, **TAX EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES** are available from some State and local governments.

## **D. Mixed Travel Reimbursements**

Mixed travel occurs when official travel within a single trip is subject to payment of per diem under the lodgings-plus system and an actual expense allowance under the actual expense system. Reimbursement will be computed under only one system for each calendar day. ([FTR 301-11.4](#)).

## **1500-04-03 Reductions in Maximum Per Diem Rates**

### **A. Lodging**

When all or part of the lodging is furnished at no cost, or at a nominal cost, to the employee by the Government (e.g. included in a conference registration fee or similar training fee), the lodgings-plus system automatically reduces the maximum per diem rate to the M&IE rate only (or fraction thereof).

### **B. Meals**

When all or part of the meals are furnished at no cost or at a nominal cost to the employee by the Government, the applicable M&IE rate shall be reduced by the amounts prescribed by the Government in TABLE 1 below. In cases where **all meals** are provided on any whole or partial day of travel, the reimbursement will be the incidental expense (IE) portion of the per diem.



**1. Meal Reduction Table for CONUS Locations.**

	<b>M&amp;IE RATES</b>				
	<b>\$30</b>	<b>\$34</b>	<b>\$38</b>	<b>\$42</b>	<b>\$46</b>
<b>Breakfast</b>	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$9
<b>Lunch</b>	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$11
<b>Dinner</b>	\$16	\$18	\$20	\$22	\$24
<b>Incidentals</b>	\$2	\$2	\$2	\$2	\$2

**2. Meal Reductions Outside CONUS. (\*See Appendix 1).** When meals are provided at no charge to an employee traveling outside the continental U.S., the M&IE rates for localities in both non-foreign and foreign areas shall be reduced by the applicable dollar amount shown in **Appendix 1** (Foreign M&IE rate chart) at the end of this directive.

**3. Complimentary Meals.** The M&IE rate should not be reduced for a complimentary meal(s) provided by common carriers or hotel/motels.

**1500-04-04 Reductions in Per Diem for Extended-Stay Travel**

**A. Policy on Extended-Stay Lodging: HHS Travel Manual Chapter 5-10**

"Employees on long term assignment should be able to maintain a reasonable standard of living, without reaping any significant financial gains, or suffering any substantial losses. An employee's personal preference, i.e., staying in superior accommodations, should not be considered as necessary additional living expenses. Rates must be reduced as follows unless circumstances of a particular travel assignment lead the authorizing official to the conclusion that a different rate is in the public interest. The fixing of per diem rates within CONUS is expressly discouraged."

<b>Within CONUS</b>	<b>Maximum Per Diem Rates</b>
Temporary duty travel of not more than 30 calendar days.	<u>Lodgings-plus</u> rate for the locality concerned.
From 12:01 a.m. on the 31st calendar day through the 90th calendar day.	Amount equal to 65% of the lodgings rate for the locality(rounded to the next whole dollar) plus an allowance for M&IE.
From 12:01 a.m. on the 91st calendar day through 12:00 midnight prior to the day of departure from the long-term TDY station.	Amount equal to 30% of the lodgings rate for the locality (rounded to the next whole dollar) plus an allowance for M&IE.

<b>Outside CONUS</b>	<b>Maximum Per Diem Rates</b>
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Temporary duty travel of not more than 60 calendar days.	Per diem rate for the foreign area.
From 12:01 a.m. on the 61st calendar day through the 90th calendar day.	Amount equal to 60% of the rate applicable on the 60th day.
From 12:01 a.m. on the 91st calendar day through 12:00 midnight prior to the day of departure from the place of the TDY.	Amount equal to 33 1/3% of the rate applicable on the 60th day.

## **B. Extended-stay M&IE rate**

In addition to reducing the lodging expenses, consideration should also be given to reducing the allowable meals and incidental expenses. The Federal Travel Regulations state in part "When travel assignments involve extended periods of more than 30 days at TDY locations and travelers are able to secure lodging and/or meals at lower costs, the per diem rate should be reduced accordingly." If an employee on long term assignment rents accommodations with cooking facilities, the M&IE portion should be reduced. Figures derived from the Department of Agriculture fixes a prepared home meal @ approximately \$6.00. To this amount should be added the IE allowance for a total reimbursement rate.

## **1500-04-05 Leave Taken While in Travel Status**

### **A. General**

The NIH cautions the Institutes and Centers to be sure that personal travel preferences of employees do not compromise the planning and conduct of official travel. There is a sensitivity that annual leave planned in conjunction with official travel, especially international travel, can at least contribute to the appearance that the official travel is being organized to fit into the personal travel and leave preferences of the employee, rather than the other way around. For this reason, it is suggested but not regulated that the amount of annual leave taken, especially on foreign travel, should not exceed the length of time devoted to attending a meeting. The NIH Institute and Center travel authorizing officials may take this guidance into account when making decisions based on individual travel situations.

Leave taken while in travel status should be shown on the Travel Voucher. The type of leave and the exact hour of departure from and return to duty status should be shown.

### **B. Annual Leave**

Leave of absence (other than illness or injury or a personal emergency situation) for one-half or less of the prescribed daily working hours shall be disregarded for per diem purposes. Where the leave is more than one-half of the prescribed daily working hours, no per diem shall be allowed for that day.

Charging Employees for Annual Leave for Monday Returns. NIH policy is that employees are required to return by the "first available flight" upon completion of duties, even if this entails travel during the weekend. Under various CG decisions and guidance provided in the GAO

Civilian Personnel Law Manual, it is clear that an employee may be required by their IC to return from official travel on his or her own time to avoid excess costs associated with delaying travel unnecessarily over a weekend. Should an employee elect to delay their return until the following Monday, they would be entitled only to the additional per diem which would have been payable had they begun return travel following completion of work on Friday. An employee's supervisor has discretion whether or not to approve leave for an employee, for Monday returns. If the employee is "ordered" to return on Friday for reasons of official necessity, the employee may also be entitled to compensatory time for the travel time. "Mere presence" at the job on Monday, or the next workday, is not sufficient justification to entitle the employee to compensatory time.

### **C. Emergency Travel Due to Illness or Injury**

Provisions governing per diem allowable for emergency travel performed due to an incapacitating illness or injury or because of a personal emergency situation, as well as the continuation of per diem due to incapacitating illness or injury of the employee are found in [FTR 301-30](#).

### **1500-04-06 Actual Expense Allowance (AEA)**

#### **A. General**

This part applies world-wide (both within and outside CONUS) for Civilian travelers on official Government business.

#### **B. Authority**

Agencies may authorize or approve reimbursement for actual and necessary subsistence expenses incurred during official travel when such expenses are unusually high due to the special circumstances of a specific travel situation, or when the authorizing official deems it necessary to carry out the mission of the trip. Actual expense allowance reimbursement shall be authorized for individual travel assignments or specific travel situations only after appropriate consideration of the actual facts existing at the time the travel is directed or performed. Authorizers may approve actual and necessary expenses for a group of travelers attending the same meeting or event for the same period of time, but blanket issuances for automatic actual and necessary expenses for an entire locality, regardless of when travel occurs there, is forbidden.

#### **C. Delegation of Authority**

(See NIH Manual Issuance 1130- Delegation of Authority, [Travel #1](#).)

#### **D. Relationship to Per Diem**

Generally, authorization of actual subsistence expenses is contingent on the entitlement to per diem, therefore, a traveler who would be entitled to Government per diem on days of travel when official business is being conducted, would be allowed actual and necessary expenses in the same situation when the business is under unusual circumstances.

## **E. Prudent Traveler Rule**

An employee traveling on the actual subsistence expense basis is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses as he/she would for travel on a per diem basis.

## **F. Conditions Warranting Authorization of Actual Expenses**

1. **General.** Travel on an actual subsistence basis may be authorized "when deemed warranted", or under unusual circumstances when the applicable maximum per diem rate is insufficient. The maximum per diem rate, although generally adequate, may be insufficient for a particular travel assignment because the actual and necessary subsistence expenses are unusually high due to special duties or because subsistence costs have escalated due to special or unforeseen events. Actual expenses should *only* be authorized when the subsistence costs exceed the applicable per diem allowance by an amount in excess of \$5.00. Since lodging constitutes a major portion of the subsistence expenses, travel on an actual expense basis may be authorized when the lodging costs absorb all or nearly all of the applicable maximum per diem allowance.
2. ***Situations Which May Warrant Approval of Actual and Necessary Expense Reimbursement.***

**HHS Travel Manual Chapter 05-20 provides that staying in a particular hotel in order to be near the place of official business is not in itself an adequate justification for requesting, authorizing, or approving travel on an actual expense basis.** However, the following scenarios may warrant such authorization or approval:

- a. The employee is attending a prearranged meeting or conference where meals and rooms must be procured without availability of other less expensive alternatives, or
- b. Available accommodations cannot be obtained within a reasonable commuting distance from the TDY location and transportation costs to commute to and from the less expensive lodging facility consume most or all of the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodgings, or
- c. The travel is to an area where the applicable maximum per diem allowance is generally adequate but subsistence costs have escalated for a short period of time due to special functions such as national sports events, festivals, etc., or
- d. The employee, because of special duties of the assignment, necessarily incurs unusually high expenses in the conduct of official business, or
- e. The employee necessarily incurs unusually high expenses incident to accompanying another employee in a situation similar to the one described in (d) above.

## **G. Advanced Authorization**

Advance authorization for Actual Expense Allowance will be requested by memorandum, accompanied by a notation on the Travel Order, justifying the expenses on the basis of the individual circumstances in the particular case. Requests must contain the following:

1. **Identification of the specific TDY location and purpose** of the travel;
2. A **recommended maximum daily rate not to exceed 300%** of the applicable rate for the area including a description of the specific circumstances why the higher rate is necessary;
3. If the IC requires, a **comparison cost of three (3) other lodging rates within the site location**;
4. An **estimate of the cost impact** (AEA rate vs. Government per diem rate);
5. The recommended time **period for effectiveness of the established rate**; and
6. The **number of employees applying for the Actual Expense Allowance** on a single request memo.

## H. Post Approval

Post approval of actual expenses reimbursement will be limited to:

1. **Emergency situations** in which requests for prior travel authorization were not possible.
2. **Change of per diem rate or similar situation** where during the course of a particular assignment, actual and necessary subsistence expenses incurred were much greater than the per diem allowance due to unanticipated changes in per diem (i.e., foreign rate change) or other exceptional circumstances.

**NOTE:** When travel has been authorized on an actual subsistence basis at less than the maximum per diem rate (e.g., Not to exceed situation (NTE) fixed expense reimbursement), post approval may not be made to increase the daily monetary limitation of the specified Travel Order.

## I. Maximum Daily Rates

1. For **travel within CONUS**, the maximum daily rate for subsistence expenses shall not exceed 300% of the applicable maximum per diem rate (Appendix A of the FTR) rounded to the next higher dollar. (See [FTR 301-11.305](#)).
2. For **travel outside CONUS**, the maximum daily rate for subsistence expenses shall not exceed the greater of the amounts prescribed below in items (a) and (b) by the Departments of Defense and State (Section 925).
  - a. 300% of the applicable maximum per diem rate (rounded to the next higher dollar)
  - b. \$50 plus the applicable maximum per diem rate, whichever is higher.

## J. Reimbursement Limitations

When the actual subsistence expenses incurred during any one day are less than the maximum daily rate authorized, the employee shall be reimbursed only for the lesser amount. Expenses incurred and claimed (including those for fractional days) shall be reviewed and allowed only to the extent determined to be necessary and reasonable by the agency.

1. **Reimbursement not to exceed 300%.** Reimbursement for M&IE shall not exceed 300% of the M&IE rate applicable to the TDY location; or \$25 plus the M&IE rate applicable to the TDY location, whichever is higher.
2. **Reimbursement not to exceed 100%.** When meals and incidental expenses are to be reimbursed on the 100% flat rate basis, reimbursement shall not exceed the maximum per diem rate on full calendar days of travel or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the applicable rate on partial days of travel.

## K. Documentation/Receipt Requirements

When travel is authorized on an actual subsistence basis, the employee shall itemize on the travel voucher each expense for which reimbursement is claimed on a daily basis. Receipts shall be required for lodging, regardless of amount, and any individual meal when the cost is over \$75. Meals must be itemized separately; i.e., breakfast, lunch, and dinner. **Exception.** If reimbursement for M&IE remains at 100% (Government rate), NO RECEIPTS or itemization of meals is required.

## 1500-04-07 Other Allowable Expenses

### A. General Expenses

When authorized or approved, the following miscellaneous expenses shall be allowed:

1. **Baggage expenses** for transport of "official business materials".
2. **Services of guides, interpreters, and drivers of vehicles.**
3. **Use of computers, printers, faxing machines, and scanners.**
4. **Services of typists, data processors, or stenographers.**
5. **Use of conference center room or hotel room** for official business.
6. **Official telephone calls/service** (use Government provided services whenever possible; commercial lines when necessary.)
7. **Faxes, telegrams, cablegrams, or radiograms.**
8. **Lodging taxes.** Taxes may be claimed only for the "authorized per diem stated on the Travel Order".
9. **Laundry, cleaning and pressing of clothing expenses.** These expenses are applicable for TDY travel (**CONUS only**) extending a period of **4 consecutive nights or longer**. When travel meets this requirement, a traveler may claim up to:
  - o **\$5** times the number of consecutive nights on the trip for the **first 30 days** at a TDY location;
  - o For extended TDY travel **at the same location**, reimbursement should be limited to actual expenses NTE an amount equal to **\$3** times the number of consecutive nights on the trip for **days 31 through 90**; and
  - o **\$2** times the number of consecutive nights on the trip for **days beyond 90 days**.

The above expenses should be authorized on the Travel Order prior to departure.

Receipts are required only for individual purchases of laundry services exceeding **\$75**.

**Unusual Circumstances.** Where circumstances necessitate the incurrence of unusual laundry/dry cleaning costs and if properly justified, the appropriate delegated official may authorize an amount in excess of the standard allowance, i.e., \$5 per night. This authorization should take place prior to the trip but the claim for such expenses may be post-approved. However, in all cases, the following requirements must be met:

- o You must incur a minimum of 4 consecutive nights of lodging while on

- TDY travel within CONUS; and
- A justification for the higher laundry/dry cleaning allowance must be documented on the Travel Order (pre-authorization) or on the Travel Voucher (post-approval); and
- Receipts are required for all laundry/dry cleaning purchases claimed for reimbursement (except coin-operated machine usage where receipts are not available) when the actual expenses claimed on the voucher exceed the standard allowance, i.e., \$5 per night.

**NOTE:** Commissioned Officers may be authorized these expenses only when they are incurred while traveling Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS). For additional information see JFTR Chapter 4 Part U4225 and Appendix "O" Part T4040 at the following web site: <http://dcp.psc.gov> (Scroll left frame and click on "Links of Interest" and then under "Government Information" click on "JFTR" – and scroll to the applicable chapter).

## **B. Traveler's Checks, Money Orders, Certified Checks, or ATM Services**

Reimbursement for the cost of each of these items in connection with official travel may be allowed. The amount of the checks, money orders, or ATM withdrawals may not exceed the amount of funds set forth in the authorized *travel advance* on the Travel Order to cover the estimated reimbursable expenses.

## **C. Fees Related to Travel Outside CONUS**

Reimbursement for the following items may be approved:

1. **Conversion of currency.** Commissions for conversion of currency in foreign countries.
2. **Check cashing costs.** Charges covering exchange fees for cashing United States Government checks or drafts issued for the reimbursement of expenses incurred for travel in foreign countries. (Reimbursement for fees to cash salary checks is NOT allowed).
3. **Trip insurance.** Cost of trip insurance purchased by employees for using a government-furnished or privately owned vehicle during official business, for specific or individual trips into a foreign country. Trip insurance covers potential liability for property damage or personal injury or death to third parties. Reimbursement is limited to instances in which the purchase of such insurance is required by foreign statute or is a practical necessity due to the legal procedures of a foreign country which, in the event of an accident, could result in detainment of the driver or impoundment of the vehicle. The amount of reimbursement is limited to the cost of the minimum amount of insurance required for the use of a foreign country's roads or the minimum amount required to be purchased by industry custom.
4. **Travel document costs.** Fees in connection with the issuance of official passports, visa fees, cost of photographs for passports and affidavits.
5. **Charges for inoculations** that cannot be obtained through a Federal dispensary.
6. **Other expenses.** Miscellaneous expenditures not enumerated in this section, when necessarily incurred by the traveler in connection with the transaction of official business, are allowed when approved.

## **D. Registration Fees and Other Advance Deposits (e.g., reservations for meeting rooms).**



There are three basic methods for the payment of registration fees:

1. ***Direct Payment by the Government Using the I.M.P.A.C. VISA Purchase Card.*** Charge the traveler's registration fee on **the VISA Purchase Card**. This accommodates early payment of a fee when it is a requirement for submission of an abstract, etc. several weeks or months before the actual trip occurs. Benefits realized through early payment are:
  - a. No "late charge" assessed for submitting the fee after the due date, and
  - b. It prevents the traveler from either incurring this expense out-of-pocket or from having it billed to a personal account before travel voucher reimbursement.
2. ***Direct Payment by the Government with Pre-Trip Direct Deposit.*** An automated Travel Order may be initiated early with ONLY the registration fee "advanced". When the approving official "pays" the order, the registration fee is direct deposited to the traveler's designated financial institution.
3. ***Pre-Payment by the Traveler.*** Travelers may pay their registration fee by:
  - a. Using personal funds (writing a check, cash, etc.); or
  - b. Obtaining an ATM "cash advance" with their Government- issued VISA Travel Card; or
  - c. Charging it on a "personal" credit card.

**NOTE:** In (a), (b), and (c) above, the traveler would be reimbursed by claiming the fee on the Travel Voucher at the conclusion of their trip.

4. ***Fixed Fee Events.*** Where registration fees and other costs (e.g., one night of lodging) are required in advance, the Government-issued Purchase Card should be used to pay for these expenses. Breaking down the costs of meals, lodging, etc. will no longer be a requirement.

**NOTE:** In the above cited example, be sure to delete any prepaid lodging from the travel voucher reimbursement.

## **E. Telephone Calls**

NIH policy for the reimbursement of telephone calls while in travel status is as follows: (Reference 41 CFR 101-35.201).

1. ***Official business calls.*** When justified, calls to conduct official business while in travel status are fully reimbursable. There is no cost limitation for telephone calls necessary to fulfill business commitments and the mission of the travel purpose.
2. ***Use of Government-issued telephone calling card.*** If travelers make use of the Government calling card for business telephoning, then reimbursement is not claimed on the travel voucher; however, if the traveler incurred personal expenses for the business calls, then the reimbursement is claimed on the travel voucher with proper justification and receipts if possible.
3. ***Telephone calls home while in travel status – CONUS.*** HHS Travel Manual Chapter 4-20 states that an employee traveling for more than one night (2 or more nights) on

Government business in the United States may make a brief, direct dial station-to-station call to his or her residence (but not more than an average of one call per day).

**NOTE:** Commissioned Officers may make a call to their residence but the communication must be only to advise of the traveler's safe arrival, to inform or inquire about medical conditions, and to advise regarding changes in itinerary. For additional information see JFTR Chapter 4 Part U4505 at the above web site.

Employees are expected to incur expenses in the same manner as a prudent person would. Therefore, when making calls to the residence, the following order of preference must be followed unless prevented by circumstances or time zone differences:

- a. The Federal Telecommunications System (FTS)
- b. Government-provided long distance telephone service, other than FTS; and
- c. A commercial network.

Chapter 4-20 further states that travelers for the Department will be allowed a brief call not to exceed an average of \$5 per day. For example, in averaging the allowable number and cost, a traveler on a trip of five (5) days could:

- d. Make up to five calls. This could be one call per day or three calls one day and two on another day.
- e. "Be reimbursed up to \$25. This could be for five calls costing \$5 each or one call costing \$25.

4. ***Telephone calls home while in travel status – OUTSIDE CONUS.*** Chapter 4-20 also states that an employee traveling on Government business to a foreign country longer than two (2) days may be authorized to make a phone call to his or her residence.

**NOTE:** Commissioned Officers may make a call to their residence but the communication must be only to advise of the traveler's safe arrival, to inform or inquire about medical conditions, and to advise regarding changes in itinerary. For additional information see JFTR Chapter 4 Part U4505 at the above web site.

Approving officials must be sensitive to the employee's needs yet at the same time keep in mind the Government's interest by assuring that the expense of such calls are reasonable. Therefore, the following guidelines are to be applied in authorizing foreign telephone calls:

- a. The determination that telephone calls home from a foreign country will be allowed must be made prior to the beginning of travel. Once the determination is made, authorization for these calls must be stated on the travel order.
- b. Due to major cost differences in foreign phone rates, the authorizing official must also authorize the frequency, and estimated costs of telephone calls on the travel order.

5. ***Conditions affecting foreign telephone calls.*** Numerous conditions affect the cost of telephone calls from foreign countries. These include the foreign country's telephone carrier system, hotel add-on charges, additional tariffs added on from country to country, etc. The NIH has determined that travelers may be reimbursed for foreign telephone call(s) to their residences when authorized prior to travel for a cost not to exceed the international **transmitting costs plus the first 3 minutes of conversation time**. The number of times (frequency) of phone calls determined by the authorizing official must

also be stated on the travel order. Major deviations, over 20 percent, from estimated cost authorized on the travel order may be accepted if the authorizing official upon review of the voucher claim determines that the amount is justified and reasonable under the circumstances.

**NOTE:** Telephone access fees are included in lodging costs as outlined in NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter-04-00 D\(1\)](#)

## **1500-04-08 Conference Planning – Agency Responsibilities**

**A. General.** This part applies worldwide (both within and outside CONUS) for NIH travelers when attending a Government sponsored conference or a non-Government sponsored conference.

**B. Authority.** FTR 301-74, "Conference Planning", sets forth agency responsibilities when arranging or planning a conference. In addition, this part addresses specific statutory requirements that must be applied when performing this function.

**C. Delegation of Authority.** (See NIH Manual Issuance 1130 – Delegations of Authority, Travel No. 17, "Conference Planning Provisions", pending release)

**D. Planning Costs.** When planning a conference, all direct and indirect conference costs paid by the Government should be taken into consideration, whether paid directly by other agencies or reimbursed by other agencies to travelers or others associated with the conference (See FTR 301-74.2). Some examples of such costs are:

1. Authorized travel and per diem expenses;
2. Hire of rooms for official business;
3. Audiovisual and other equipment usage;
4. Computer and telephone access fees;
5. Light refreshments;
6. Printing;
7. Registration fees;
8. Ground transportation; and
9. Employees' time at the conference and on en route travel.

**E. Cost Comparisons.** Cost comparisons should include, but not be limited to, a determination of adequacy of lodging rooms at the established per diem rates, overall convenience of the conference location, fees, availability of meeting space, equipment and supplies, and commuting or travel distance of attendees (See FTR 301-74.4 and FTR 301 Appendix E).

**F. Conference Arrangements/Requirements.** When planning a conference, efforts must be made to: **1)** minimize all conference costs, including administrative costs, conference attendees' travel costs, and conference attendees' time costs; **2)** maximize the use of Government-owned or Government provided conference facilities as much as possible; **3)** identify opportunities to reduce costs in selecting a particular conference location and facility; (e.g., availability of lower rates during the off-season at a site with seasonal rates); **4)** limit your agency's representation to

the minimum number of attendees determined necessary to accomplish your agency's mission; and **5)** develop and establish policies and procedures to ensure that these requirements are met.

**NOTE: Accessibility.** All sponsors of Government conferences must ensure that selected facilities are accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities as required under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services, and Developmental Disabilities Act of 1978, 29 U.S.C. 794, and Departmental regulations at 45 C.F.R. Parts 84 and 85.

**G. Granting Waivers of the Requirement to Hold a Conference in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Approved Accommodations.** The FEMA publishes a list of hotels/motels that meet fire and life requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990. Federally funded conferences cannot be held in properties that do not comply with this law, unless a written waiver is granted for a particular event based upon a public interest need (See Delegations of Authority NIH Manual Issuance 1130, Travel No. 17, "Conference Planning Provisions", pending release and FTR 301-74.14 to 74.16).

**H. Conferences Held in the District of Columbia.** HHS will provide the NIH with a list of alternative government sites in the District of Columbia when short-term conference space cannot be secured in an NIH installation or facility. You can contact the OFM Travel, Fellowship Pay, and Cashier Section on (301)-435-2927 to obtain this list (See FTR 301-74.17).

#### **I. Record-keeping Requirements for Auditing Purposes.**

For each conference you sponsor or fund, in whole, or in part for **30 or more attendees, where the majority of attendees (at least 51%) are Federal employees in TDY travel status inclusive of nonfederal persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA with a Travel Management Center (TMC)**, a record of the cost of each alternative conference site considered and the selection rationale must be maintained. In doing so, cost comparisons must be established for at least three sites (See FTR 301-74.19). This documentation is to be maintained for inspection and auditing purposes as prescribed in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 4.7 "Contract Records Retention".

#### **1500-04-09 Conference Planning - Conference Lodging Allowance**

**A. General.** This part applies worldwide (both within and outside CONUS) for NIH travelers when attending a Government sponsored conference or a non-Government sponsored conference.

**B. Authority.** Agencies may authorize or approve reimbursement for a **Conference Lodging Allowance (CLA)** in accordance with FTR 301-74.6 through 301-74.10. It may not always be possible to obtain lodging facilities within the established lodging portion of the per diem rate for the locality where the conference is being held. Consequently, in negotiating lodging rates with the properties in the chosen location, you may exceed the established lodging portion of the per diem rate by **up to 25%**, if necessary. These provisions also permit agencies to reimburse employees' subsistence expenses by using the CLA method as prescribed above, rather than the Actual Expense Allowance (AEA) method as outlined in NIH Manual 1500-04-06.

**C. Policy.** FTR 301-74.6 permits the Government to authorize a CLA as outlined above. You may not use both the CLA and the AEA method of reimbursement concurrently (See FTR 301-74.12). You must use only one reimbursement method per day in accordance with FTR – 301-11.4. Approval authority for reimbursement of the CLA resides with the Government agency sponsoring the conference, e.g., if FDA is sponsoring the conference and it does not authorize the CLA, an NIH attendee may not be authorized for the CLA (For additional information on applicable conditions, see [F](#) below).

**D. Delegation of Authority.** (See NIH Manual Issuance 1130 – Delegations of Authority, Travel No. 17, "Conference Planning Provisions", pending release)

#### **E. Definitions.**

1. **Conference.** A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium or event that involves attendee travel. The term also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404 (See FTR 301 Appendix E).
2. **Conference Lodging Allowance (CLA).** A pre-determined maximum allowance of up to 25 percent greater than the applicable locality lodging portion of the per diem rate.

#### **F. Conditions Warranting Authorization and Reimbursement of Expenses**

1. **Government sponsored conference.** When an appropriate conference facility can not be secured at the chosen locality per diem rate, for a Government sponsored conference, the sponsoring agency will determine the appropriate conference lodging allowance, up to 25 percent above the established lodging allowance for the chosen location, if necessary, and that set rate shall be allowable for all employees of any agency authorized to attend the conference.

**NOTE 1:** If another Federal agency is sponsoring the conference and authorizes a CLA, that rate shall be allowable for all agency employees attending that conference.

**NOTE 2:** State and Local Governments have no authority to set travel reimbursement rates for Federal employees. The CLA can only be set by a Federal Government sponsoring agency.

2. **Non-Government sponsored conference.** When an employee attends a **non-Government sponsored conference**, the travel approving official of the Government employee in attendance at the non-Government sponsored conference may authorize the employee to be reimbursed for lodging expenses incurred up to the CLA rate.

**G. Advanced Authorization.** Since the CLA is a pre-determined rate, authorization of this method of reimbursement should be in advance of the trip and noted accordingly on the Travel Order.

**H. Post Approval.** Post approval is limited to: 1) emergency situations in which requests for

prior travel authorization were not possible and, 2) where, during the course of a particular assignment, there was an unanticipated change in the lodging portion of the per diem rate i.e., foreign rate change, or 3) other exceptional circumstances.

**I. Meals or Light Refreshments Furnished.** When meals are furnished at nominal or no cost by the Government or are included in the registration fee, the appropriate meal reduction must be made from the M&IE rate. When light refreshments are furnished at nominal or no cost by the Government or are included in the registration fee, no deduction of the M&IE allowance is required (See 301-74.21).

#### **1500-04-10 Conference Planning – Use of Appropriated Funds to Provide Light Refreshments.**

**A. General.** This part applies worldwide (both within and outside CONUS) for NIH travelers when attending a Government sponsored conference.

**B. Authority.** Under FTR 301-74.11, agencies sponsoring a conference may provide light refreshments to attendees during breaks at official conferences. The General Services Administration (GSA) has determined that in order to be eligible to receive these refreshments, you must be in **Temporary Duty (TDY) travel status**.

**C. Policy.** HHS Travel Manual Chapter 1-20, (pending release) states that appropriated funds may be used to pay for light refreshments for Federal employees at conferences when the following four conditions are met: **1)** The conference is being held for an official HHS mission requirement for which employee TDY travel has been authorized through the issuance of a Travel Order; **2)** At least **51%** of the attendees are Federal employees who are in temporary duty travel status (**See (G) below**); **3)** The conference duration is at least four hours; and **4)** Appropriate procurement processes have been followed when ordering and funding the light refreshments in advance of the conference.

**D. Delegation of Authority.** (See NIH Manual Issuance 1130 – Delegations of Authority, Travel No. 17, "Conference Planning Provisions", pending release)

#### **E. Definitions.**

- 1. Employee.** An individual employed by an agency, regardless of status or rank; an individual employed intermittently in Government service as an expert or consultant when paid on a daily when-actually-employed (WAE) basis (these are not contractors); or an individual serving without pay or at \$1 a year (also referred to as an "invitational traveler" (See FTR 301-1.2).
- 2. Light Refreshments.** For morning, afternoon, or evening breaks are defined to include, but not be limited to, coffee, tea, milk, juice, soft drinks, donuts, bagels, fruit, pretzels, cookies, chips, or muffins (See FTR 301-74.11).
- 3. Nonfederal Persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA).** Individuals as defined in **(E)(1)** above for whom NIH has issued an invitation to travel via a Travel Order or via a Purchase Order/BPA with a TMC

for the purpose of their attendance at the conference. **NOTE: This does not include individuals invited to speak and receive an honorarium whose travel is paid for via a Professional Services Order or a Purchase Order.**

4. **"NIH Local Area"**. A distance of 35 miles or less from the employee's official duty station or residence (See NIH Manual 1500 Chapter 06-01(B)).

**F. Ordering and Paying for Light Refreshments.** The provision of light refreshments is a conference administrative cost and needs to be authorized through standard procurement procedures. An employee may not order or pay for light refreshments without appropriate procurement authorization and related program funding. Employees who go through appropriate procurement channels before ordering and/or paying for a conference's light refreshments and expend personal funds for this purpose, can only be reimbursed through a procurement ratification process. Therefore, an employee may not order or pay for a conference's light refreshments using the Government contractor-issued Travel Card. Also, an employee may not submit a Travel Voucher or a Local Travel Voucher to be reimbursed for personal expenditures associated with the payment of light refreshments. Any claim of this nature should be disapproved and the employee should be informed of the procurement ratification process.

**G. Travel Status of Conference Attendees.** In order to justify the provision of light refreshments, at least **51%** of the attendees at the conference must be Federal employees in TDY travel status. You may count nonfederal persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA as Federal employee attendees.

**NOTE:** If the official conference meets all four mandatory conditions as highlighted in (C) above, and light refreshments are provided, all Federal attendees (including Federal attendees in their local travel area) may partake at no personal cost. However, even when the four mandatory conditions are adhered to, NIH cannot use appropriated funds to pay for light refreshments for nonfederal attendees unless 1) there is a mechanism for them to pay the cost of providing such refreshments, i.e., a registration fee; or 2) if they are attending on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA with a TMC.

## **H. Provision of Light Refreshments Scenarios.**

### **1. Outside the "Local Area"**

- a. NIH has a retreat and all Federal attendees are in TDY travel status. Light refreshments may be served during breaks at this retreat.
- b. NIH is sponsoring a conference and at least 51% of Federal attendees are in TDY travel status (includes nonfederal persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA with a TMC). Light refreshments may be provided during breaks to all Federal attendees (includes nonfederal persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA with a TMC) but not to other nonfederal persons.

### **2. Within the "Local Area"**

- a. NIH sponsors a meeting in the local area and the number of Federal attendees in TDY travel status is less than 51%. Light refreshments may not be served.
- b. NIH is sponsoring a conference in the local area and the attendees are comprised of local Federal attendees, Federal attendees in TDY travel status, nonfederal persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA with a TMC, and other nonfederal



persons.

c. If at least 51% of the attendees are Federal employees in TDY travel status (includes nonfederal persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA with a TMC), light refreshments may be served during breaks to all Federal attendees including nonfederal persons on Invitational Travel Orders or on a Purchase Order/BPA with a TMC but not to other nonfederal persons.

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